



**PEDRO E. SEGARRA**  
MAYOR

## 2012 Rising Star Speech

Good morning!

Thank you Oz and the MetroHartford Alliance, and I hope that each of you had a joyful holiday. I also want to take the opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year.

I have always been energized by the New Year because it symbolizes a renewed sense of purpose and a commitment to achieving goals. That feeling is even stronger for me this year because I am starting a first, full term as Mayor.

And with the support and commitment of everyone in this room, Hartford can and will be a city in which we can all take pride.

Connecticut's Capital City has had its share of ups and downs. Along with most of the country and the world, we are recovering from an economic crisis that has impacted our homeowners, small businesses and corporations. Our challenges include working diligently to lower the unemployment rate, to provide our children with the quality education they need to compete in a global economy and to keep our businesses afloat.

One factor that has not changed and keeps us moving forward despite challenges is our human resources, a diverse and engaged group of people who believe in Hartford and are willing rise to the challenge of addressing the city's needs. A perfect example of this is the Alliance's HYPE, Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, which engages young professionals in the community and encourages them to become ambassadors for the region. In an inspiring display of what Hartford is all about, hundreds of young professionals turned out to donate toys and thousands of dollars for families in need.

The economic climate has claimed businesses, but we have a net gain for the first time in years. We welcomed a new market downtown, and while the original business plan was not what we hoped it would be, the city is committed to reopening a market at that location. Several new businesses opened in 2011: Burger Baby, House of Essence, Sonesta, Zula and the Verizon Store are among them. Looking ahead, Rio on Pratt Street and Braza on the Plaza – Constitution Plaza, that is – are among the businesses that will open in the next few months. We have been energized by the success of Winterfest, which has drawn more than 35,000 skaters to date. We have anchors such as the Wadsworth Atheneum and The Bushnell that continue to provide the best in arts and culture. And we are closer than ever to welcoming CCEDA's first tenant on Front Street. What's more, our

corporate partners have verified the positive momentum – in my conversations with folks like the XL Center, the Connecticut Convention Center and the Connecticut Science Center, all have reported record attendance and good prognosis going forward.

What we are, what we are becoming, and the movement involved are all part and parcel of urban transformation. Many cities before us have undergone this type of metamorphosis, and many more will in the years and decades ahead. The key is to continue to move forward in tandem with these changes, to recognize what is a part of a natural process, and not become fixated on events that may momentarily appear to contradict growth.

Hartford is moving forward and will continue to do so. Legislation passed with the participation of the MetroHartford Alliance last session has lessened the commercial tax burden, and sends the message that the city is open to business. With the support of the City Council, we were able to put an end to unsustainable budget increases and reduce Hartford's mill rate for the first time in 10 years. In addition, our quest to designate Connecticut's first national park has gained significant momentum. Congressman Larson and I traveled to Washington to provide testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and were encouraged by the support we received from subcommittee Chair Congressman Bishop. This designation will bring much-needed jobs to Hartford, the region and the state. In fact, our recently completed Coltsville Special Resource Study indicates that Coltsville will create 1,000 jobs and bring \$113 million in revenue by 2016 when the building is completed – and it must be completed. I am also grateful to Governor Malloy and the State Bond Commission, which recently approved \$5 million in supplemental funding for the project.

These forward steps have set the stage for Hartford's Capital City Initiative. Everyone recognizes that for decades we have been Connecticut's Capital City. But we must be recognized as the capital city for more than housing government buildings. We should also be acknowledged as the capital city because we serve as a center for social, religious and educational diversity, and because we are situated as the premier location for arts, culture, history, sports and entertainment offerings. Most importantly, we should be the city all of Connecticut looks to, because we are a place that fosters and accommodates an interchange of ideas. The Capital City Initiative will reinforce my belief that we can accomplish great things when we collaborate with our partners and link public, private and cooperative plans to solidify Hartford's progress and engage our communities and our region.

So how do we get there? First, we must address the perception of public safety. In mid-2011 we witnessed the upward trend of homicides and shootings in the city. We immediately organized a regional and cooperative collaboration with local police departments, federal agencies and the state offices of probation and parole to develop a strategy that proactively addresses the systemic causes of violent crime. The shooting task force, an ongoing effort with the Chief State's Attorney's Office, is another example of pro-activity and partnership, one in this case that resulted in a 100 percent reduction in shots fired in the City. This is not just about reducing homicides. It is indicative of an approach that addresses the problem before it occurs.

The second way is through efforts such as One City, One Plan, which established a community vision, global priorities and identified actions to solidify our status as the state capital. As we drive up I-91 we have to make sure that structures such as Coltsville make a statement on Hartford's critical role in manufacturing in this country. As we drive through I-84, the demolition of buildings such as Capitol West and the HB Davis Building must send the message that we have made progress on the

impossible. So many projects have languished, and it is only through a commitment to getting things done will Hartford have the right to its title as Connecticut's Capital City.

Third is the Livable and Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative or LSNI, which provides a foundation for all of our neighborhood efforts. Safer residents, stronger neighborhoods, and preservation of quality of life are priorities that impact everyone in this room, regardless of the strength of your connection to Hartford. They are the cogs in the wheel of Hartford's economic vehicle, and we are the drivers of that vehicle.

LSNI, which ensures the alignment of economic development projects, will enhance the vibrancy of small businesses because the neighborhoods where those businesses are located will have improvements in infrastructure such as quality housing, reduced blight and safer streets – to support their vitality. This initiative also encompasses projects such as streetlight repair in collaboration with Connecticut Light & Power, street paving and increased parking availability spearheaded by the Hartford Parking Authority.

Fourth is our commitment to jobs and enhancing the income and education for residents through Opportunities Hartford. This initiative identifies the greatest existing opportunities in education, job readiness, and career advancement; coordinates individual and group efforts to enhance the opportunities; and funnels public and private funds to invest in those opportunities.

In a few moments you will hear from Doug Suisman, who will provide an update on iQuilt. This plan is the perfect symbol of what Hartford must aspire to if it is to be the municipality every other city and town in Connecticut looks to as an example of innovation and rebirth. To move the iQuilt further forward, we are engaging Doug to do a comprehensive design and review of Main Street from Park Street to I-84, including traffic flow, bus utilization and sidewalk and street lighting. At its core, iQuilt is a testament to collaboration, seamlessly linking Hartford's cultural assets in a way that promotes engagement. More importantly, it will drive talent attraction and retention, which is crucial if we are to be the city in which everyone in the state takes pride.

It is my hope that this spirit of collaboration will take hold beyond iQuilt, beyond Downtown to every corner of our city. It is my wish that every office in every corporation in the city endeavors to connect its work with the success of our neighborhoods. Every program should represent a partnership; every project should be carried out with the goal of strengthening all businesses and growing jobs for all residents.

As you know, no city can survive or thrive where the business community operates separately from the neighborhoods. This tale of two cities has in the past put us in an untenable situation: businesses need people to support them, and people need jobs and access to capital. In order to make our city more viable in economic development, we must reverse blight and improve our neighborhoods. I am asking you to recognize that we are truly in this together, to join with other businesses such as the Hartford, Aetna, CIGNA and others. Regardless of your zip code, your position, your income: you have a stake in the capital city – and its neighbors, its residents and its children.

I have and will continue to foster an environment for safety, education and economic growth. I am committed to working with our neighborhoods, businesses and region to carry out this mission. I need your compassion and your commitment. Together, Hartford will be the envy of New England. Your Capital City is counting on you.

Thank you.